

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 23, 2021

9:02 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Roger Holland, Chair
Senator Gary Stevens, Vice Chair
Senator Shelley Hughes

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Peter Micciche
Senator Tom Begich

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 119

"An Act relating to oaths of office; and requiring public officers to read the state constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and the United States Constitution."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 34

"An Act providing for the establishment of public schools through state-tribal compacts."

- HEARING CANCELED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 119

SHORT TITLE: OATH OF OFFICE

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) REINBOLD

04/07/21	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/07/21	(S)	EDC, JUD, STA, FIN
04/23/21	(S)	EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205

WITNESS REGISTER

SENATOR LORA REINBOLD
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor OF SB 119.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[9:02:28 AM](#)

CHAIR ROGER HOLLAND called the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Stevens, Hughes, and Chair Holland.

SB 119-OATH OF OFFICE

[9:03:09 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 119 "An Act relating to oaths of office; and requiring public officers to read the state constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and the United States Constitution."

[9:03:32 AM](#)

SENATOR LORA REINBOLD, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of SB 119, read opening remarks, as follows:

[Original punctuation provided.]

The need for all elected and appointed officials to read and take responsibility to uphold the United States Constitution and the Declaration of Independence as well as the Constitution of the State of Alaska is to ensure that the power of the individual citizens and the Alaska residents is not truncated, eroded or extinguished.

Without the verified awareness and vital knowledge of how the state and federal governments were structured to facilitate peace, equality, elected officials will be set up to fail those if they do not fully understand what they take their oath to. The responsibility to mindful administrate within the governmental academic structure on behalf of the public is the greatest importance because the cherished trust that the people place in public officials, they must be fully equipped with the knowledge and the direction of our government in its relentless pursuit of justice, equality, and whenever they are employed by the people. Our requirement of all public officials to commit to upholding these essential documents ensures that not only such elected officials have clear direction by which to govern and

to administrate, it enforces the connect of the trust between the people of the state of Alaska and those charged with acting on their behalf.

9:05:39 AM

SENATOR REINBOLD paraphrased the sponsor statement, which read:

[Original punctuation provided.]

This bill requires all those whose are statutorily or constitutionally required to take an oath in the State of Alaska to read: the Declaration of Independence; the United States Constitution and The Constitution of the State of Alaska. Following the reading of the documents, a signed statement acknowledging the action will be filed at the Alaska State Libraries, Archives and Museums directly after taking the Oath of Office.

9:06:16 AM

CHAIR HOLLAND asked her to identify the acronym SLAM.

SENATOR REINBOLD answered that it stands for the State Libraries, Archives and Museums (SLAM).

9:06:29 AM

CHAIR HOLLAND said he did not see that the bill raised many education policies and thus he would not hold the bill in committee very long. He emphasized that he understands the importance of the U.S. Constitution and the Alaska Constitution. Although he appreciates the significance of the Declaration of Independence, he pointed out that Alaska does not require office holders to protect and defend it. He asked whether she would like to explain why the Declaration of Independence was included in SB 119.

SENATOR REINBOLD responded that when the 13 colonies decided to declare their independence, colonists had many grievances with Great Britain and King George III. She included the Declaration of Independence in SB 119 because it is a powerful reminder of why the colonists were willing to lay down their lives for liberty. Further, the Declaration of Independence marries perfectly with the Bill of Rights, she said.

9:08:07 AM

SENATOR STEVENS agreed that everyone should be familiar with these documents. He asked whether city and borough council and assembly members were included.

9:08:30 AM

SENATOR REINBOLD answered that any elected official who is required to take an oath to the State of Alaska would be included.

9:09:00 AM

SENATOR HUGHES said she would almost require this for those who file for any elected office. She wondered how many people who pledge to uphold state and U.S. constitutions are not familiar with the documents. She directed attention to Section 2, which refers to each special officer and person appointed. She asked for the definition of special officer.

SENATOR REINBOLD answered that a special officer refers to a law enforcement officer.

9:10:11 AM

SENATOR HUGHES referred to Section 9 of SB 119, which requires the principal executive officer of each department and the member of each board within the state government. She related her understanding that it would include commissioners and deputy commissioners. She asked whether this provision would also apply to commission members.

SENATOR REINBOLD answered that it will apply to anyone who is already statutorily required to take an oath of office. She said the bill does not add any additional people to the list.

9:10:52 AM

SENATOR HUGHES asked if she knew who was included in the principal executive officers category. She surmised it would apply to commissioners, but she wondered if it included deputy commissioners or other department leadership. The language identifies that the members of each board must take the oath. She asked whether that would include commissions as well.

SENATOR REINBOLD related her understanding that all commissioners have to take an oath of office. Every employee must sign that they read the documents. She explained that she introduced the bill because taking the oath of office differs for judges, elected officials and peace officers. SB 119 would require that everyone who takes an oath of office must read the Constitution of the State of Alaska, the Declaration of Independence, and the United States Constitution, sign that they did so and that oath is filed at SLAM.

[9:13:50 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES directed attention to Section 9 and said she recalls that all state employees must sign the oath. She asked whether this is a new oath for them.

SENATOR REINBOLD answered that all state employees must sign that they read the Alaska Constitution. She said this bill does not change the requirement for state employees.

[9:14:19 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND pointed out that the questions did not appear to be related to education policies. He reminded members that SB 119 has a further referral to the Senate Judiciary and State Affairs Committees.

[9:14:33 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES asked how many people who would be required to sign an oath that would be filed at SLAM. She surmised it would be thousands of people.

SENATOR REINBOLD answered that State of Alaska employees have to sign an oath. She offered her belief that the Oath of Office is an important historical document for judges and elected officials. Thus, it is important to preserve these historical documents in SLAM so people can see the signed Oath of Office document.

[9:15:36 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES stated that SLAM falls under the Department of Education and Early Development. She asked whether anyone from SLAM was online.

CHAIR HOLLAND offered to arrange to have someone from DEED online at the next meeting. He noted that Section 1 includes school board members, which may be why it had a referral to the Senate Education Standing Committee.

[9:16:32 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND asked if the sponsor would like to review the sectional analysis of SB 119.

[9:16:45 AM](#)

SENATOR REINBOLD reviewed the sections of SB 119, paraphrasing each section. It read as follows:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Section 1. AS 14.12.090 is amended to require that school board members, before taking office, shall read the Constitution of the State of Alaska, the Declaration of Independence, and the United States Constitution. Each section requires specific elected or appointed officials to read the documents.

Section 2 applies to a law enforcement officer.

Section 3 applies to a supreme court justice.

Section 4 applies to a court of appeals judge.

Section 5 applies to a superior court judge.

Section 6 applies to a district court judge and magistrates.

Section 7 applies to legislators.

Section 8 applies to municipal officials.

Section 9 applies to executive offices and board members.

Section 10 applies to a public officer or employee of the state.

[9:17:46 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS offered his view that this should be required reading for everyone.

[9:18:26 AM](#)

SENATOR REINBOLD thanked members. She said she does not want to see any infringement on the rights of the people that she serves. She stated that she read all three documents required under the bill in the same day, which was a remarkable experience that has emboldened her. She said she has come to love these documents. She offered to research and respond to Senator Hughes' questions.

[CHAIR HOLLAND held SB 119 in committee.]

[9:19:49 AM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Holland adjourned the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting at 9:19 a.m.